

Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention

May 12, 2009

Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington St.
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned write to you on an urgent matter. Nuclear weapons, many still on hair-trigger alert, threaten daily our very existence. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is largely ignored by the Nuclear Weapon States. The Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists remains at five minutes to midnight.

Nevertheless, there is a rapidly growing consensus that a nuclear weapon-free world can and must be achieved in the near future. Renowned political leaders from around the world have spoken out about the need to abolish nuclear weapons.

On 9 December 2008, in Paris, more than 100 world leaders endorsed the goal of abolishing nuclear weapons completely. They included Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, UK's Prime Minister Gordon Brown, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Pakistan and China have said explicitly they support abolition, which is the objective of that new initiative called Global Zero.

What we lack today, is the political will to actually begin the negotiation to eliminate nuclear weapons. The 26 members of NATO, including Canada, all subscribe to its nuclear weapon policies. Those policies state that nuclear weapons are essential and must be maintained into the unforeseen future. As long as NATO holds to these policies then Russia and China will maintain their nuclear arsenals and the non-nuclear weapon states will be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons, too.

Twelve years ago, experts in law, science, disarmament and negotiation came together to draft a **Model Nuclear Weapons Convention**. Their purpose was to determine whether nuclear disarmament is possible by exploring the legal, technical and political requirements for a nuclear weapon-free world, taking into consideration the security of all states.

The Model Convention proposal was presented to the UN by Costa Rica in 1997 and has been well received by many of its members. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a speech titled "Five Steps to a Nuclear Free World," stated that "All parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty could consider negotiating a nuclear weapons convention, backed by a strong verification system, as has long been proposed at the UN".

Prime Minister, now is the time to engage internationally by advancing a nuclear weapons convention. Please seize the opportunity created by President Obama's historic speech in Prague calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the joint US-Russian statement committing both countries to significant reductions in their nuclear stockpiles.

Canada has long been an influential voice in support of peace and disarmament. We look to you to once again assume this leadership role. Time is of the essence.

Sincerely,

The undersigned

CC: Mr. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition
Hon. Gilles Duceppe, Leader, Bloc Québécois
Hon. Jack Layton, Leader, New Democratic Party of Canada

Signatories

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